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ABSTRACT

Shared decision-making can help schools keep sight of their true goals. In the educational sector the conflicts that arise in collective bargaining disputes can be destructive to the organization. Schools require more than the mere coexistence of labor and management. They require cooperation and strong, supportive relationships. To establish a genuine partnership, the superintendent should establish a cabinet including representatives of employee groups. In each school building, the principal should establish a school council to assist with school governance. In Salt Lake City (Utah), the school district has implemented such a system. Administrative agreements between the superintendent and the teachers association specify that each school establish a governance council including both parents and staff. At the district level, decisions are made by a group including the superintendent, staff members, the president and the executive director of the teachers association, the president and the executive director of the administrators association, and the staff coordinator. In addition to adjudicating local decisions, the group makes recommendations on fringe benefits and leave policies, and determines staffing patterns and the allocation of resources. In this city, shared governance has created a strong partnership with parents and teachers. (Author/JM)

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SHARED GOVERNANCE OF SCHOOLS

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The shared governance of schools requires an understanding of how institutions develop and operate. It also requires the discussion of some important things that we have learned. In addition we need to understand individual responsibility for what schools do. Finally we need models and a basic purpose.

There, then, are the items presented in this paper: theory, lessons, the players, a system, and the purpose. Together they indicate that the shared governance of institutions, is not only possible; but that unless we engage in it, we are all in serious trouble. Shared governance may be the only way to restore order, tranquility, and morality in our public institutions.

THEORY.

Social scientists have examined a variety of institutions and have developed certain broad conclusions which may be applicable to all institutions. The conclusions are these:

1. Most of our public institutions, once established, tend to spend a great deal of time and money to maintain themselves.
2. Public institutions, in their concern to maintain themselves, tend to forget their original purpose for which they were established.
3. Leadership in public institutions has a tendency to forget that the institutions were set up to benefit clients and not the personal goals of their leaders.
4. Public institutions, like schools, tend to create conflicting interests between teachers and administration.
5. Accountability in public institutions is difficult to achieve.
6. Public institutions talk a great deal about equity and justice but have difficulty establishing it.

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If the above statements are correct, as many social scientists seem to think they are, then it is my contention that the shared governance of institutions will go a long way in correcting these faults. It is also my belief that collaboration in education is a moral issue. When decision-making is made from a base of power rather than consensus it tends to violate ethical principles or processes. You are all familiar with such decision-making practices at the presidential level. Power is not an adequate substitute for morality.

In recent years there has been considerable discussion of collaboration, participatory management, management by consensus, and team management. All of you, I am sure, are familiar with Douglas MacGregor's Theory "X" and Theory "Y" and Abraham Maslow's work in self-actualizing psychology. Both MacGregor and Maslow have demonstrated that people contribute most when they are active participants in deciding what organizations do.

I will not bore you with the writings of other social scientists like Barnard, Haiman, Banne, and Hansen. All confirm that "people understand best those things they have actually experienced and are influenced most by processes in which they have participated."

LESSONS.

There are two dramatic lessons that we have learned from studies of organizations, especially schools. Both lessons are important bases for moving toward the shared governance of schools. It is not necessary to learn these lessons over and over and over. Here are the lessons:

1. The New York Experience. It has been clearly demonstrated that when the interests of one party overshadow the balanced interests of all parties, institutions are destroyed. In New York, not only were the schools near bankruptcy, but the entire State was near collapse. Today Al Shanker and the American Federation of Teachers are willing

to trade shared governance for hard-nosed collective negotiations.

The lesson has been learned that the constant pressure for more and more for one group soon leads to instability and insecurity for all groups. In New York, thousands of teachers are losing their jobs each year and parent groups are becoming more and more militant each day. All have finally admitted that collaboration may be a better way than confrontation.

2. Conflict and Achievement. The message is now clear, conflict leads to lower achievement. Conflict is for the most part destructive, not only to the organization, but to the people it purports to serve. Strikes in education lead to lower test scores. So does conflict between superintendents and boards of education. It is abundantly clear that collective negotiations has reduced the quality of services provided for students and that the conflicts it has created have reduced student achievement.

The educational setting differs from the private sector where negotiations started and grew. That which may be appropriate for industry may not be appropriate in schools. In industry negotiations lead to coexistence. Two parties, with separate private interests, develop agreements to protect those interests. In such a setting there are few common interests, if any.

In the industrial arena the interests are competitive. The owners wish to make the greatest profit possible, and the employees struggle to obtain as much of the profit as they can for themselves. The product is not influenced by the competition between the two

parties. Car and washing machines are not affected by strikes, conflict, violence, or turmoil. Television sets or ingots have no emotions, no learning style, no reasoning ability. Coexistence is established through written contracts and each party plans the next "fight."

Schools require more than coexistence; they require cooperation, mutuality of interest, and strong supportive relationships. Schools are more than factories; they are communities of people helping each other. They are people working for a broad common purpose--to improve the quality of life for themselves and their students. How the community members live and work together, to a great extent, determines what children learn or do not learn. The students are not unfeeling products; they are active participants in the struggles. They are directly affected by what happens between teachers and administrators.

Where cars are indifferent to struggles between workers and corporate giants, children "learn" the relationships exhibited in schools by teachers, principals, social workers, and superintendents. If we wish to teach cooperation, compassion, worth, dignity, courtesy, respect; then we must exhibit these behaviors ourselves. Our own acts must support the ethic we so fondly verbalize. These traits are difficult to commit in a climate of frustration, confrontation, conflict, and antagonism. If we learn to live our ethic, collective negotiations are not needed.

The education family can achieve unity or it can divide itself and cripple the talents, the hopes, and the aspirations of children. Educators can strive for common purposes or they can create chaos, confusion, distrust, and hostile camps of men and women bent on achieving private purposes. The directions we travel, the things we do will depend on individual people: superintendents, board members, teachers. The

responsibility lies with individuals and not with organizations, or board of directors, or with legislatures. The enemy is us!

It is not unfeeling boards of education who make school policy. It is men and women with hearts and minds, with hopes and desires, with strengths and weaknesses. It is not associations that teach, or negotiate, or work with the superintendent of schools. It is individual men and women who have families, who have knowledge and feelings, who hope to guide children into a world made better because of their work. If only they could work together---they could travel with Emerson to the mountain top and touch fingers with eternity.

And unless we do so, all of our curriculum guides will turn to charcoal, and all of our hopes for a better world will be dimmed and dulled, and all our works will become parched and shredded buds. What we need in education is not more books, more television sets, more buildings, more objectives. What we need is more cooperation, more heart, more faith, more belief in the basic goodness of man, more men and women of goodwill working together for common purposes, rather than working in an atmosphere of conflict and confrontation to achieve private interests.

In the face of these lessons, it seems to me that it is absolute nonsense for people to discuss such trivia we recently read about in educational journals:

1. Should Boards of Education have their own staffs?
2. Should principals form their own negotiation units?
3. Should parents be represented at the negotiations table?
4. Should superintendents employ their own attorneys?

Reductionism in education is no longer appropriate. What is needed is more effort toward the unification of groups, more consensus building, more shared governance. It is

insane to believe that we can continue our present trend toward conflict, confusion, negotiations, private interests, and separatism. More than anything else, the lessons are clear, we need to build common purposes with methods that will promote equity, justice, and fairness in the educational systems. The schools of this nation must once more return to their original purpose--providing education for the boys and girls who attend them.

THE PLAYERS.

A school district is strongest when the Board of Education and the Superintendent of Schools are in a genuine partnership to attain common goals. When the Superintendent and the Board of Education work together, the district has stability, direction, and tranquility. When power struggles exist, anxiety and stress become the norm behaviors, and no one has enough energy to provide quality services for the students. When the adults are engaged in promoting private vested interest, the students are forced to take up sides, to participate in the struggles, and to divert their energies from learning to "straightening up the adults."

The Board and the Superintendent should serve as models of civility, or caring, of being genuinely interested in quality education under the best working conditions possible. Both should be articulate spokesmen for quality schools, for community involvement, for shared governance, for openness in decision-making, for trust building, for demonstrating to all that men and women of goodwill can survive and prevail, can work and live in peace and harmony, despite the critics, the pessimists, the Illich clan, and the promoters of vested interests.

When power is used continuously, it no longer remains effective. Furthermore, power usually depresses the desire to serve and the will to work. In the education society,

power should no longer be the norm. Power should be replaced by shared governance, by participatory management, and by community consensus building.

A school district is a community of scholars, a society of men and women dedicated to truth, honor, and the vision of democratic idealism that has stirred the hearts and minds of Americans in every period of history. The work of the school should proceed in an atmosphere of common respect, of tolerance for differences, and cooperation, where each person is free from the barriers of provincialism, the oppression of power, and the limitations of prejudice.

Schools are a human society to be administered cooperatively with employees. The Board of Education must obtain the feelings of employees before adopting major policy items. The Superintendent must meet often to discuss procedures with other employees of the district. Representatives from classified organizations and teacher groups should have a voice in all major decisions made by administrators. Deliberate structures should be established to facilitate shared decision-making.

At the central office the Superintendent should establish a cabinet which includes representatives of the various employee groups. This avoids building up a long list of so-called demands which are unloaded on the bargaining table in March of each year. If shared governance is operating well, we may be able to eliminate altogether the nonproductive games of spring which are played as a ritual similar to the rituals implemented by students on college campuses.

In each school building the principal should establish a school council to assist with the governance of the school. This council should include employees and patrons. Together, they can decide what is best for the students. School hours, discipline practices, curriculum, working conditions, and objectives can all be decided on a cooperative basis.

Teachers and parents want equity and justice in the educational community. They are not asking for more than that to which they are entitled. When left out of the decision-making process, both turn to militant actions for developing equity and fairness. This often leads to an adversary relationship. At best, it is one in which teachers, parents, and administrators coexist much the same way as the parties coexist in industry. The schools, however, differ from industry and need to operate as a community.

If the schools are to educate for the democratic ethic, we must practice that ethic as adults. Children learn the living of the educational community. The types of alternatives developed are not the important consideration. What is important is that an alternative be developed that creates a community and allows maximum time and effort to be devoted to cooperation, support, and education. In the end we may or may not receive the same economic benefits, but there will be more of us at retirement to enjoy those benefits--whatever they are.

A SYSTEM.

Now let me discuss a specific alternative that exists in Salt Lake City--it is based on principles of shared governance. It has been in operation for several years. It has led to higher student achievement. This is how it works.

First the Board of Education has taken the basic position that the governance of our schools is a shared responsibility of parents, teachers, and administrators. They have adopted and implemented "shared governance" throughout the district. It begins with the basic policy statement: "It is the policy of the Salt Lake City School District that only major policy statements and economic agreements be brought to the Board of Education. Other agreements shall be administrative items, to be administered by the Superintendent of Schools. It is also the policy of the district that the Superintendent administer the schools in cooperation with the employees and the patrons of the district. The Board of

Education supports the concept of shared governance." In order to implement this policy the teacher association and the superintendent developed "administrative agreements" to make shared governance a reality in the district.

The administrative agreements specify that each school unit establish a governance council whose membership includes both parents and professional staff. Some school units have included students. The staff members are elected by the staff and the parent members are selected from various geographic parts of the attendance area. The Councils meet at least once each month to "operate" the schools. All decisions which are made must be subject to budget controls, state and federal law, Board of Education policy, and ethical standards. The local councils can make any decisions which do not violate these four barriers.

Schools operate best when there is close cooperation between home and school. Shared governance is a method for establishing that cooperation. A strong partnership between home and school results in benefits for students and creates a positive climate in the schools. It also provides parents and teachers opportunities to develop excellence in all that is done.

The School Community Council extends local decision-making to each local school unit. It is there that decisions can best be made concerning those items that augment Board of Education policies. It is at the local level that what is best for the school can be decided. Working in harmony with the Board of Education, each school can decide local issues which support the values and desires of the school patrons and teachers.

The councils are charged with important responsibilities. Their decisions affect the lives and education of many children. It is their obligation to decide fairly, to adjudicate for justice, and to create relationships which support cooperation and orderly

processes. Recognizing Board policies, abiding by state and federal regulations, staying within budget limits, and promoting ethical practices; the School Community Councils are a tremendous asset to the Salt Lake City School District and make a significant contribution to the operation of our schools. Active and responsible Councils can adjudicate many items which normally end up on the bargaining table.

Decisions which cannot be made at the school level are adjudicated at the district level by the superintendent's council. This governance group includes the superintendent, staff members, the president and the executive director of the teachers association, the president and the executive director of the administrators association and the staff coordinator. In addition to adjudicating decisions of local school units, the group makes decisions of a broader nature: recommendations on fringe benefits, recommendations on leave policies. It also decides staffing patterns and allocation of resources. Salaries are studied, but final recommendations are developed by a small group made up of teacher association members, the superintendent, and the clerk-treasurer. That area (salaries) is the final vestige of negotiations. In Salt Lake City, however, it is more like a seminar than a collective negotiations session.

As recommendations are developed they are presented to the Board of Education for adoption. The process can occur any time of the year--it need not wait for the spring carnival. Loading up the negotiations bag for the spring festivities is one of the serious disadvantages of collective negotiation. Shared governance may not be the final answer, but in Salt Lake City it has created a strong partnership with parent and teachers.

THE PURPOSE.

We have, what Charlotte Ryan calls "The Open Partnership: Equality in Running The Schools." As she states in her book: "Lasting power lies in equality, but equality comes from working together. Only when people join together in an open partnership to meet a common concern can they be reasonably certain of attaining their objectives."

The Salt Lake City alternative is only one possible substitute for continued conflict. There are others. Whatever the alternative it should establish accountability, fairness, and justice. It should be built on a position of equity for both the Board of Education and the Association. In Salt Lake City the Board and the Association have accepted accountability as a necessary base for everything else that is done. Our policy states this:

"Each teacher of the district shall be evaluated each year according to an evaluation and remediation plan developed by the Superintendent and the Association. It is the position of both parties that persons not suited to the educational setting should not be employed by the school district."

When professional people work together in good faith; when trust levels are high; when justice is a common aim, any alternative will work better than confrontation as it is now practiced. It all reminds me of the farmer in New England.

Each night, before going to bed the farmer would listen to the town clock striking the hours. One night he heard one, two . . . eleven, twelve, thirteen. Alarmed, he ran to the bedroom to wake up his wife. "Wake up, Sarah," he shouted, "It's later than it's ever been."

In the education society, unless we implement shared governance, we may all end up battered, bruised, and unappreciated. It's time for responsive and statesmen leadership from all areas. Let's all start today. It may be later than it's ever been.

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